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Canada. Family Violence Prevention  
Division.

Adolescent sexual offenders







Information from ...

# The National Clearinghouse on Family Violence

## Wife Abuse

### What Is Wife Abuse?

- Wife abuse involves physical and sexual assault, emotional and psychological intimidation, degradation, deprivation and/or exploitation of women by their intimate partners.<sup>1</sup>
- Fear and pain affect women's personal strength and courage. As a consequence of abusive behaviour they can suffer:
  - bruises, broken and cracked bones, back and head injuries, loss of hearing, impaired eyesight, malnutrition, burns, disfigurement and death;<sup>2</sup>
  - terror, depression, suicidal tendencies, severe anxiety, loss of self-esteem and power over their own lives and feelings of hopelessness and shame;
  - feelings of isolation, due to the nature of abuse; abuse is often hidden from members of extended families, friends and neighbours.

- Children who witness this behaviour are also seriously affected.

### How Widespread Is Wife Abuse?

- Estimates indicate that one in every ten women in Canada (one million) is abused by her partner each year.<sup>3</sup>
- In 1988, 15% of all Canadian homicide victims were women murdered by their male partners.<sup>4</sup>
- According to the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, in 1988, 75 921 men were charged with all forms of assault, including wife abuse.
- In 1987, the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General reported 16 282 domestic assault occurrences. A total of 93.5% of resulting charges were laid against men.



- There are no social, cultural, religious, financial, geographic or occupation-related barriers to being abused or behaving abusively.

### **Is Wife Abuse a Recognized Problem?**

- In the 1988/89 fiscal year, the National Clearinghouse on Family Violence received over 1000 requests for information on wife abuse. This number of requests is increasing rapidly.
- Over 13 000 Canadian individuals and organizations subscribe to the quarterly newsletter of family violence issues, *Vis-à-Vis* produced by The Canadian Council on Social Development.
- There are over 300 shelters, safe home networks, satellite houses, safe environments, multipurpose emergency and transition homes in Canada.<sup>5</sup>
- There are more than 100 Canadian treatment programs for men who abuse women.<sup>6</sup>

### **Wife Abuse Is in Every Community, Every Region, Every Province and Territory.**

#### **Questions to Consider:**

#### *Why Is Wife Abuse so Widespread?*

It is widely held that wife abuse occurs because:

- historically, women have not been valued as equal partners in society;<sup>7</sup>
- as individuals, we learn to hold power over others and to encourage submission. We are taught these lessons through the process of socialization and through sex-role stereotyping. Negative messages about women reinforce the theme of inequality;<sup>8</sup>
- as a society, we tend to condone and value aggression in general (sports, war, violent toys);
- abusive behaviour is often accepted and condoned.

#### *How Seriously Is the Abuse of Women Taken in Canada?*

- Fourteen departments within the federal government are actively involved in the development

of a national approach on family violence, including wife abuse.

- Across Canada, provincial and territorial governments have given high priority to public education and curricula on the issue of male violence against women.<sup>9</sup>
- There are thousands of Canadian women and men involved as workers or volunteers in sheltering and health/social services, employee assistance, treatment and training programs, education strategies, advocacy, research, community co-ordinating committees, policy planning, criminal justice intervention and prosecution.
- Comprehensive initiatives are now found:
  - in municipal, regional, provincial, territorial and federal governments;
  - in local, regional, provincial, territorial, and national non-governmental institutions, organizations and associations.
- Many religious groups and organizations within the corporate sector are committed to learning about abuse and to developing support and intervention strategies.
- The best effects often result when different groups and disciplines work and learn together. Focussing on prevention, intervention, advocacy, education, training and/or service and program development, such groups examine how societal values, norms and attitudes about violence, relationships and female and male roles influence the perpetuation or prevention of wife abuse.

### **Working Together, We Can Prevent Wife Abuse.**

#### **What does preventing wife abuse really mean?**

*To individuals it means:*

- seeing prevention as a societal issue.
- taking responsibility.
- learning and acting on what we learn.



- thinking about how we live together.
- caring about ourselves, each other and our communities.
- respecting each other
- finding new, non-violent, non-oppressive ways to live together as men, women, parents and children.
- asking difficult questions about how we treat ourselves and others.
- becoming personally involved in some way.
- deciding to be part of the solution.

### What Can You Do to Help?

*As a parent*, you can teach children to value the contributions, rights and responsibilities of individuals, regardless of gender, age, culture or disability.

*As a member of your community*, you can find out what is being done, what is needed and where you fit into the solution.

*As a member of the working community*, you can learn about employee assistance programming on the issue, the needs of employees who are in crisis, as well as available and needed support services in your community.

*As a member of an association*, you can ask what is being done, what remains to be done, and what you and your association could be doing now and in the future.

*As a member of a religious organization*, you can follow the lead of your peers, determine what needs to be done and how you can participate.

*As a member or consumer of media*, you can think about positive and negative images and messages, you can make choices, you can act responsibly.

*As an educator*, you can learn about what needs to be taught.

*As a professional*, you can understand the needs and experiences of individuals, work with other professions and value the knowledge of those who work with abused women and men who abuse.

*As an individual*, you can help change this society into a safe place for individuals to live free from violence and abuse of every kind.

### It Is Time for More of Us to Care.

*Audio-visual*: The Family Violence Prevention Division of Health and Welfare Canada has compiled over 50 films and videos on family violence, which can be borrowed free of charge through the regional offices of the National Film Board.

### Suggested Reading

- Interdisciplinary Project on Domestic Violence, *The Other Side of the Mountain: Working Together on Domestic Violence Issues: Part One*, National Clearinghouse on Family Violence (NCFV): 1988.
- The Canadian Council on Social Development, *Vis-à-Vis*, national newsletter on family violence; 55 Parkdale Ave., Ottawa, Ontario, K1Y 4G1.
- Education Wife Assault publications, 427 Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ontario M5S 1X7.
- Health and Welfare Canada, *Proceedings from the Working Together: 1989 National Forum on Family Violence*, NCFV: 1990.
- Health and Welfare Canada, *Report of the Federal Government Consultation on Family Violence with National Non-governmental Organizations*, NCFV: July 1989.
- Ontario Medical Association Committee on Wife Assault, *Reports on Wife Assault: A Medical Perspective* in the Ontario Medical Review, NCFV; 1988: 2,7.
- MacLeod, Linda, *Discussion Paper: Wife Abuse* prepared for the Working Together: 1989 National Forum on Family Violence, NCFV; 1988: 13.
- Correctional Service Canada, *Breaking the Cycle of Family Violence: A Resource Handbook*, written and produced by Bonnie Hutchinson Enterprises Inc.; 1989: 10.
- For a philosophical discussion see: MacLeod, Linda, *Preventing Wife Battering: Towards a New Understanding: A Think-tank Report*, Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1989.



- The Baha'i Community of Canada, c/o Nancy Akerman, Dept. of Public Affairs, Baha'i National Centre, 7200 Leslie St. Thornhill, Ontario, L3T 6L8.
- The United Church of Canada, *Ending Violence in Families: a training program for pastoral care workers*, NCFV; 1988.
- Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton Employee Assistance Program, *Wife Abuse Education in the Workplace: A Report and Workshop Manual*; 1985.

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## Endnotes

1. For a more detailed definition of wife abuse see Linda MacLeod, *Battered But Not Beaten: Preventing Wife Battering in Canada*, Ottawa: Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 1987, p. 16.
2. The Church Council on Justice and Corrections and The Canadian Council on Social Development, *Family Violence in a Patriarchal Culture: A Challenge to Our Way of Living*, a kit, 507 Bank Street, Ottawa, Ontario K2P 1Z5; 1988: 12.
3. Linda MacLeod, *Battered But Not Beaten: Preventing Wife Battering in Canada*.
4. Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, *Homicide Report: 1988*, Cat. No. 85-209.
5. Health and Welfare Canada, "Transition Houses and Shelters for Battered Women in Canada", NCFV; 1989: 4-31.
6. Health and Welfare Canada, "Canadian Treatment Programs for Men Who Batter", NCFV; 1988.
7. Larouche, Ginette, *Agir contre la violence, La pleine lune*, Montréal, Québec, 1987: 32-37.
8. The Church Council on Justice and Corrections and The Canadian Council on Social Development, *Family Violence in a Patriarchal Culture: A Challenge to Our Way of Living*, a kit, Ottawa, Ontario; 1988: Parts I and II.
9. Task Force on Family Violence, "Report of the Task Force", Yukon; 1985: 301-320.

This document was prepared under contract by Ann D. Sharp, Consultant. Contributions of the following individuals are gratefully acknowledged: Chantal Goyette: *Vis-à-Vis*, Joan Gullen: Family Service Centre of Ottawa-Carleton, Mark Holmes: New Directions Program for Abusive Men, Willa Kimmerly: Director, *Maison Vallée de la Gatineau* /Gatineau Valley House, Linda MacLeod: Alberta Office for the Prevention of Family Violence, Consultant and Katherine Stewart and Sue Tracy FVPD, Health and Welfare Canada. For further information on wife abuse or on any other family violence issues, contact:







